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# Trimester 3: Weeks 28-40 Providing the Best for Yourself and Your Baby

Scott Magnuson-Martinson

*South Dakota State University*

Kim Goodfellow

*South Dakota State University*

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# Extension Extra

ExEx 14043

September 1997

Family and Consumer Sciences

Pregnancy

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES / SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY / USDA

TRIMESTER 3: WEEKS 28-40

## Providing the Best for Yourself and Your Baby...

*by Scott Magnuson-Martinson, Ph.D., Extension Family Life Specialist, Texas Swanjord,  
Ph.D., Extension Associate, Kim Goodfellow, Ed.S., Extension Associate,  
Extension Family and Consumer Sciences.*

Attention in the third trimester usually focuses on preparation for an actual "other person" to join the family. Both parents can do a lot to support each other during this waiting time. Preparation for the actual birth and new roles can be an exciting challenge.

### The Parents' Emotions

No one wants to feel left out, but in this trimester either mother or father may feel neglected, pushed aside, overlooked, or ignored. Fathers may suddenly become busier outside the home. Mothers may be caught up in themselves or daydream about the baby.

Both partners have a responsibility for what happens during this time and for paying attention to their emotions and for caring about one another.

### MEN who are soon to become fathers . . .

- are encouraged to be independent and to focus on their work. With fatherhood coming, a man has to resist pressure from others to be overly focused on financial concerns; a man has to decide for himself that he wants to become a good mate and a good father, too.
- often seem to feel the need to appear competent and in control; men develop these abilities as fathers when they learn what to expect from babies and how to care for them.

- are sometimes confused about how to be a different kind of father from their own father. Men can learn to understand that when times are different, people can decide to be different – if that's what they want. It is not rejection of your father if you decide to be different from him.
- often want to use new ideas in their lives. You might have different ideas about couple relationships and responsibilities than your parents did. You can work on your ideas and make decisions by talking with others in prenatal classes or with fathers and families you admire.
- may hear jokes about guys who want to learn about children and how to become a capable and caring parent. You can think and talk about what you want to be. It takes courage to resist teasing and joking and become a good parent.

### WOMEN who are soon to become mothers . . .

- are often forgetful in their last trimester. They forget what they are about to do or where they put something. It maybe at this time the woman's mind and body are practicing letting go of some things so you can be ready to pay full attention to your new baby.

- must make a special effort to resist feeling complete with just herself and the baby-to-be. If you expect and hope the baby's father will share in its care after its born you must practice sharing and caring before it's born.
- need to know that fears about the birth process are natural. Talking with a health care provider and talking with others in childbirth classes relieves much of this stress.
- should have a total weight gain of 25-35 pounds if they are of normal weight, according to the National Academy of Sciences. Too little may cause underweight births. Too much may cause later obesity for the child, which is associated with various health problems.

## The Mother's Body

### Physical Changes and Concerns

### What You Can Do

Stretch marks	Gain weight gradually. Good posture reduces abdominal pressure and stretching.
Vaginal itching	Wear cotton underwear; wear panty hose with cotton crotch; bathe daily; avoid scratching; avoid perfumed soap and bubble bath.
Difficulty Breathing	Practice good posture; reach and stretch, giving lungs more room. Try elevating head and chest by sleeping on extra pillows. This normal situation changes near your delivery date and changes when your baby moves into position for birth.
Hemorrhoids	Avoid constipation through good diet and regularity; drink more fluids; eat more roughage (raw fruits, veggies, bran). Do not use laxatives. Sit in a tub of warm water. Strengthen pelvic muscles through exercise.

### Heartburn

Eat small, frequent meals. Decrease fat intake. Take fewer liquids with meals and more between meals. Avoid very cold foods. Do not lie down immediately after a meal.

## The Developing Baby-To-Be

By week 28, the fetus is about 14 inches long; by week 40, it is about 19–21 inches long. Its weight increases from about 2 pounds at week 28 to about 6–9 pounds at week 40. Other changes:

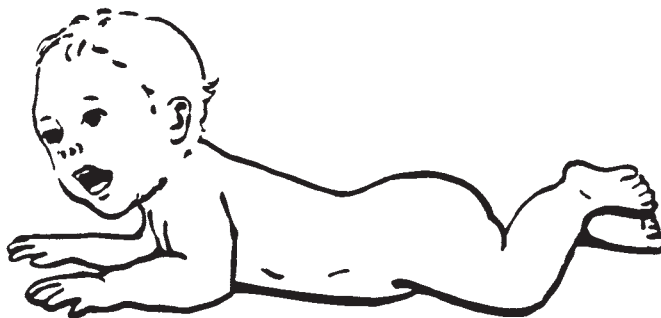
- Fetal movements are strong.
- Lungs are completing development.
- Body has no fat at first; then, as it develops, the wrinkled body plumps out.
- By week 36, the fetus is aware of light and noticeably responds to sound. Children's speech patterns are often influenced by their mothers even before birth.
- Strong maternal emotions can influence birth weights and activity levels through the release of hormones associated with stress.

## For more information . . .

ExEx 14041 for the first trimester and ExEx 14042 for the second trimester are available. Call the Extension office in your area of South Dakota for a free copy.

### Free phone info:

- Gerber Information Line (800-443-7237). Round-the-clock consumer tips.
- National Parent information Network (800-583-4135). Researchers find answers to callers questions and send them out free. Week days 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Child Care Aware (800-424-2246). Nation-wide referrals to local licensed and accredited child care providers.



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